

THE LEVEL OF YOUTH INVOLVEMENT IN CHURCH-INITIATED PROGRAMMES IN METHODIST CHURCH IN KENYA, NYAMBENE SYNOD

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Abstract

The study aimed to examine the youth involvement level in Church initiated programmes in the Methodist Church in Kenya, Nyambene Synod. Methodist Church in Kenya has come up with Church-initiated programmes to assist the youth struggling with different life issues. However, the problem continues to persist in Nyambene Synod, where the youth have kept migrating from MCK to other churches, despite the significant role church-initiated programmes play in church. The study employed a descriptive research design. Data were obtained from questionnaires, focus group discussions and interview schedules. Functionalism theory was used to establish the level of youth involvement in church-initiated programmes. The study found that not all youth participate in church-initiated programme, and Circuit ministers and circuit leaders were not offering church-initiated programme effectively. This study recommends that the church ought to embrace modern ways, including technology, to involve more youth in the programmes and give the youth more room to express themselves through different youth activities, which should be carried out more often to retain them in church.

Key terms: Church-initiated programmes, MCK, Nyambene Synod, youth, youth participation in church-initiated programmes.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The youth are agents of change who drag the elder, less active generation grudgingly along with them as they march into the future. They are a useful category for broad-scale study and tracking patterns of religious change, but one that needs to be handled cautiously because young people are not a homogenous population (Bailey & Reddon, 2013). Youth can involve themselves in church-based programmes through club projects or groups that open skills to provide community services and self-employment services (Milkey, 1992). However, Ng'ang'a (2015) continues to note that senior citizens direct the majority of church groups. Youth underrepresentation in church organizations poses a serious threat to expanding congregations. It indicates that future leaders are not being developed, which could lead to weak congregations or possibly congregational dissolution. Njoroge (2019) argues that despite the enormous number of young people who visit the church, there has been significant worry over their involvement in church activities. As a result, the majority of religious programs are run by senior citizens.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Nielson (2016) points out that through effective and active involvement in the church, youth, with the help of their parents, long-term investment and spiritual growth is achieved. However, occasionally integrating the entire congregation as youths only help facilitate the youth ministry's downfall. Hershey (1999) notes several issues that prevent the youth from participating in church programmes are due to growing influence. These include the need to find the most aesthetically beautiful and accommodating church, more mobility, youngsters looking for jobs, and lifestyle as the primary determinant of who attends church. The church's self-fulfilling prophecy is defined by its attitudes toward evangelism, which are reflected in how it reaches out to and interacts with young people. In spite of churches investing in youth through various programmes. Nielson (2016) adds that to stop secularization among youth as opposed to youth abandoning the ministry, they must greatly participate in the community and church. Today, there is a growing need for the church to acknowledge the presence of youth in service in the church. However, Town (2002) continues to add that owing to stereotype image many grown-ups have, youth sometimes fail to contribute to the church programmes. This contributes to established psychological barriers between the young generation and adults who consider the youth as young, unreliable and undeveloped. The study looked into the level of youth involvement in church-initiated programmes in the Methodist Church in Kenya, Nyambene Synod.

3.0 FINDINGS

The study sought information from circuit ministers on the level of youth involvement in Church-initiated programmes. The information is presented on Table 1.

Table1: Youth Participation in CIPs as Reported by Circuit Ministers

Participation	Frequency	Per cent	Cumulative Percent
Not all	16	61.5	96.2
Yes	9	34.6	34.6
No	1	3.8	100.0
Total	26	100.0	100.0

The comments were as follows, as shown in Table 1 by Circuit ministers regarding the rate of youth engagement in Church-sponsored programs: A total of 16(61.5%) circuit ministers indicated that not all

youth participate in church-sponsored programs, 9(34.6%) circuit ministers indicated that all youth participate, and 1(3.8%) circuit ministers indicated that youth do not participate in church-sponsored programs. The results demonstrate that most young people in the Methodist Church in Kenya, Nyambene Synod, do not participate in church-sponsored programs. This supports Hanna's (2020) contention that the youth dropout rate, lack of engagement, and crisis that it represents for many churches globally. Keeping older teens is a challenge for many churches nowadays. The study sought to determine Circuit leaders' views concerning youth participation in the Church. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Youth Participation as Reported by Circuit Leaders

Participation	Frequency	Per cent	Cumulative Percent
Not all	16	48.5	48.5
Yes	14	42.4	90.9
No	3	9.1	100.0
Total	33	100.0	100.0

According to data captured in Table 2 as provided by circuit leaders, 16(48.5%) indicated that Not All youth participate in church-initiated programmes, 14(42.4%) indicated that youth participate in Church initiated programmes, and 3(9.1%), indicated that youth do not participate in Church initiated programmes. This clearly indicates that not all youth participate in Church initiated programmes. This implies that some challenges the youth are going through, such that they even feel demotivated to participate in church-initiated programmes, hence affecting their retention.

Table 3: Involvement of Youth in Church Initiated Programmes from Youth

Statement	Strongly Disagree f (%)	Disagree f (%)	Not Sure f (%)	Agree f (%)	Strongly Agree f (%)	Total f (%)
Does the church offer any church-initiated program to the youth?	18 (7.29)	10 (4.05)	28(11.34)	95 (38.46)	96 (38.87)	247 (100)
Are you involved in any of the church-initiated programmes in your Church?	34 (13.8)	55 (22.2)	13 (5.3)	85 (34.4)	60 (24.3)	247 (100)
Do these church-initiated programmes motivate the youth?	46 (18.6)	56 (22.7)	16 (6.5)	63 (25.5)	66 (26.7)	247 (100)
Do these church-initiated programmes lead to an increase in youth in church?	37 (15.0)	35 (14.2)	45 (18.2)	66 (26.7)	64 (25.9)	247 (100)
Have these church-initiated programmes contributed to decreasing of youth in church?	63 (25.5)	43 (17.4)	58 (23.5)	52 (21.0)	31 (12.6)	247 (100)
Do youth seek out opportunities for involvement in church-initiated programmes?	48 (19.4)	63 (25.5)	33 (13.4)	60 (24.3)	43 (17.4)	247 (100)
There are church-initiated	32 (13.0)	34 (13.7)	40 (16.2)	78	63 (25.5)	247

programmes specifically targeting the youth				(31.6)		(100)
Are Church initiated programmes offered in your church effectively?	66 (26.7)	71 (28.8)	20 (8.1)	46 (18.6)	44 (17.8)	247 (100)
Do you sometimes attend services in other churches?	45 (18.2)	32 (13.0)	7 (2.8)	89 (36.0)	74 (30.0)	247 (100)

As indicated in table 3, the results show that 96(38.87%) strongly agreed that the church offers church-initiated programmes to the youth. Of the respondents, 85(34.4%) indicated that they are involved in any of the church-initiated programmes. However, 55(22.2%) of the respondents indicated that they are not involved in any church-initiated programmes. This supports Njoroge's (2019) claim that, despite the enormous number of young people who attend church, there has been significant worry about their involvement in church activities. On whether church-initiated programmes are motivating to the youth, 66(26.7%) respondents strongly agreed that they are motivating. Of the respondents, 66(26.7%) indicated that church initiated programmes increase youth in the church. However, the majority of the respondents, 63(25.5%), strongly disagreed that church initiated programmes contribute to the decrease of youth in the church. Of the respondents, 63(25.5%) indicated that youth do not seek out opportunities for involvement in church-initiated programmes. This supports Kinnaman's (2011) claim that as teenagers transition out of active church participation, millions of young people do the same. Some people leave the church group forever, while others stay there for an extended period of time while seeking to define their own spirituality.

From the table, 78(31.6%) of the respondents indicated that there are church initiated programmes specifically targeting the youth. However, 71(28.8%) of the majority of the respondents indicated that church initiated programmes are not offered effectively. This clearly shows a problem with how the programmes are carried out, and those who offer church initiated programmes to the youth do not offer them effectively, making the church find it difficult to retain the youth. This supports Dudley's (1999) argument that the Methodist church young people leave the church due to lack of involvement, boring sermons, deficient devotional life and other religious rules. Furthermore, 89(36.0%) of the majority of the respondents revealed that they sometimes attend the services in other churches. This creates serious worries on youth retention in the Methodist church in Kenya, Nyambene Synod when the majority of the youth claim that they attend services in other churches. The views of the majority of the respondents who indicated that they attend services in other churches support Nkonge and Kiende (2014) argument that church hopping is a challenge in Kenya, where church members, especially mainline churches, keep on moving from one denomination to another with little regard of how the movement affects Christian Mission in Kenya.

4.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion: From the above discussion on the level of youth participation in church initiated programmes, the circuit ministers and circuit leaders who responded to the same question indicated that not all youth participate in church initiated programmes. The majority of the respondents indicated that church initiated programmes offered by the church specifically target the youth, which helps to increase them in the church. However, most respondents indicated that youth do not seek involvement in church-initiated

programmes. In addition, most respondents indicated that church initiated programmes are not offered effectively. This might be why youth indicated that they attend services in other churches. To succeed in its mission, the church should reassess the different church initiated programmes it offers to the youth to ensure they are very effective.

Recommendations: The church ought to embrace modern ways, including technology, to involve more youth in the programmes and give the youth more room to express themselves through different youth activities, which should be carried out more often to retain them in church.

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